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ABSTRACT

To determine what a theory of adult learning should encompass, three topics were considered: current status of adult learning theory, contributions of the developmentalists, and foundation for a total person model of adult learning theory. An overview of activity related to theory building in adult learning during the 1970s showed the emphasis that adult educators placed on the planning of programs for the adult learner. Other conclusions drawn were that a truly holistic learning theory is needed and desired: theory building has focused on relevance for practice: and there are common concerns about intrinsic aspects of adult learning. A comparative analysis was conducted of twenty interpretations of adult development which fall into three categories--linear, hierarchical, and unclassified. Reasons for the analysis were to determine (1) how adulthood is interpreted, (2) how adult learning is addressed, (3) where there is consensus, (4) where the gaps are, and (5) how these various interpretations relate to theoretical models being developed. The theoretical model developed encompassed three crucial concepts which attempt to incorporate all those dynamics contributing to one's personal composition: total person as a living-learning laboratory, life events as learning lessons, and layering as a resource data bank. (Ten tenets of the Total Person Model are listed.) (YLB)

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BUILDING A THEORY OF ADULT LEARNING:

TOWARD A TOTAL PERSON MODEL

by

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I

OVERVIEW

Theory development in the social sciences is a complicated undertaking due in large part to the lack of agreement on the definition of theory or what guidelines should be followed in the theory building process. This is especially true in building a theory of adult learning where such a dearth of models exists.

Some insight into the dilemma is provided by authorities in social science research methodology, who address the theory building process. For example, Herbert Costner explains the difficulty of theory construction by pointing out

> The requirement that scientific theories include both abstract concepts and concrete implications, and that the two be logically connected, has been treated rather casually by sociologists. Traditionally, sociological theorists have focused on abstractions with loose and ill-defined implications about matters of fact. More recently, some sociological formulations have shifted to the opposite extreme, stating only connections between measures without any attempt to make more abstract claims. Either of these modes of theory construction is costly, sacrificing either the clarity of empirical implications or the integrating potential of abstract concepts.[1]

David and Chava Nachmias discuss the controversy over the place of theory in the research process, which involves the "research-then-theory" approach versus the "theory-then-research" approach. They conclude that "empirical generalizations may generate theory and theory may generate researchable problems to be tested as hypotheses."[2] Their conclusion is reinforced by Ernest Nagel, who states

> Distinguished scientists have repeatedly claimed that theories are "free creations of the mind." Such claims obviously do not mean that theories may not be suggested by observational materials or that theories do not require support from observational evidence. What such claims do rightly assert is that the basic terms of theory need not possess meanings which are fixed by definite experimental procedures, and that a theory may be adequate and fruitful despite the fact that the evidence for it is necessarily indirect.[3]

Theory building is seen as a creative process by Sellitz, Wrightsman, and Cook, who identify imagination and insight as two crucial characteristics of the theorizing social scientist. According to them,

> Theory building involves imagination that is exercised in a particularly rigorous way. Theory is an intellectual creation; scientific theories await invention, not discovery. The assumptions on which theories are based require ingenuity.[4]

Since this particular effort at constructing a theory of adult learning extends beyond the parameters of existing learning theory and beyond the realm of education, as such, but does attempt to take into account our existence as unique human beings, in toto, the model being developed is indeed an intellectual creation. It is a model based on abstract concepts that have concrete implications. It is also a model that reflects logical analysis and judgements based on the observation of human behavior.

With that in mind, a major question pertaining to the development of this theory of adult learning needs to be addressed. The question--What should such a theory encompass? In response, the following are discussed: (1) the current status of adult learning theory;

(2) the contributions of the developmentalists; and (3) the foundation for a total person model of adult learning theory.

Current Status of Adult Learning

Even though the knowledge base of adult learning is sparse, adult educators have made significant contributions toward building adult learning theory. In 1926 when The Meaning of Adult Education was published, Eduard Lindeman laid the cornerstone for a modern theory of adult learning, and launched the period, which lasted until 1942, that provided the most distinguished body of literature in the field of adult education. It was Lindeman who first posited that (1) adults are motivated to learn as they experience needs and interests that learning will satisfy; (2) adults' orientation to learning is life-centered; (3) experience is the richest resource for adults' learning; (4) adults have a deep need to be self-directing; and (5) individual differences among people increase with age.[5] Space does not permit a thorough review of contributions since then. Consequently, this overview concentrates on some of the pertinent contributions to adult learning theory that have been made by adult educators throughout the 1970s.

Cyril Houle, who in the 1950s began his investigations on what motivates adults to participate in learning activites, has continued to develop his interpretations. In his most recent work, Continuing Learning in the Professions, he explores how and why professionals continue to learn.[6] He examines the motivation to learn in a programmatic context by focusing on the participant's mode of performance, based on the response to a new idea or practice as perceived by the individual. Houle proceeds to classify into five cateogries how

professionals function as adult learners according to the extent of their adaptation to innovation. His first four categories focus on active professional practice, while the last category concentrates on facilitation. The categories include [7]

(1) the innovators--those who constantly seek to improve their performance, but are not bound by established ways

(2) the pacesetters--those who value the opportunity to be exposed to new ideas and techniques, but maintain a conservative attitude toward their adoption

(3) the middle majority--those who gradually adopt innovation because the innovations have become generally accepted.

(4) the laggards--those who learn only what they must know if they are to stay in practice, and

(5) the facilitators--those who work outside the mainstream of practice, although their work is designed to uphold and strengthen it.

Self-directed learning is the focus of Allen Tough's work, which builds upon Houle's and has particular bearing on the independent adult learner.[8] Tough has developed what amounts to a formula to identify the adult's learning effort, that he refers to as an "adult's learning project". According to him, an "adult's learning project" consists of a series of planned learning episodes concentrated on a given topic of interest and conducted over a given period of time. He asserts that the adult learner proceed through three phases in the process of beginning a self-directed learning project. The first phase is deciding to begin, and involves goal-setting, self-assessment, information gathering, knowledge and skills selection, level of success, and a cost-benefit estimate. The second phase is choosing the planner,

which may be him or herself, an object, another person, or a group on a proactive and collaborative basis. Finally the third phase is engaging in the learning episode which has been designed in the planning process, and entails the availability of a variety of quality resources and the learner's ability to use them.

The work of Roger Boshier, also furthers that of Houle and focuses on what motivates participation in education programs. His research, in which he makes extensive use of the Education Participation Scale, concentrates on how motivation affects participant behavior.[9] His model of motivation for participation, which reveals a heavy influence of Maslow's Heirarchy of Needs, describes participants as life-change (deficiency) or life-space (growth) oriented. According to Boshier, life-space oriented people participate for expression rather than for learning to cope with some aspect of their lives; life-chance people participate because of the need to develop survival-directed knowledge, attitudes, or skills. Boshier is concerned with the psycho-social reasons for participation, and acknowledges that motives change as a function of age.

J. R. Kidd also draws heavily on the work of Maslow in his exploration of the adult learner.[10] He places particular emphasis on the relationship between the learner and his or her developing self, and on the influence of life experience on learning. Kidd states that

> The learner reacts to all experience as he perceives it. The learner is at the center of experience; in a very real sense he occupies a 'private world'....However, experience is only potential; he can deny it to consciousness, distort it, or modify it. One man can react to an identical experience in a way markedly different from another....[11]

He then goes on to identify six dimensions of adult learning that focus on the individual's education for selfhood. They include the following.

(1) The learner's reaction to experience involves his or her total being

(2) Learning occurs when the individual perceives that his or her needs can be satisfied by certain courses of action

(3) The learner's behavior can be fully understood only from his or her own perspective and point of view

(4) The development of the self, which occurs gradually within the human being, is crucial for all learning

(5) All of the learner's new experiences are symbolized and organized into some relationship to the self, which includes their being ignored, rejected, or distorted when the experience is perceived as being inconsistent with the structure of the self.

(6) Probably the most important learning task is the development of a self that can deal with reality.

It is Kidd's premise that the adult learner, in terms of the self, must be committed or involved if effective learning is to take place.

In his massive compilation that proports to address adult learning in a developmental context, Alan Knox handles adult learning theory in an astoundingly circumscribed manner.[12] However, he does identify a series of factors that modify the learning and intellectual performance of the individual. They include characteristics such as physical condition, personal and social adjustment, relevance to the individual, speed and time pressures, socioeconomic status, social change, personal outlook, and personality. Three of those factors--physical condition, social class, and personality--also are

age-related in their effect on the adult's ability to learn. Furthermore, Knox points out that change is a major dynamic of adult learning. According to him,

> There are various ways in which adults try to adapt to change events. They include frantic activity, action, educative activity, seeking assistance, contemplation, and withdrawal. When a change event occurs, the need for adaptation tends to produce heightened readiness to engage in educative activity....[13]

He goes on to say that, "As adults match needs to opportunities, they tend also to expand their ability to relate knowledge resources to action problems."[14]

The only woman researcher in this group of adult educators, K. Patricia Gross has conducted innumerable analyses on the characteristics, needs, and interests of adult learners. Based on some of her recent research, she identifies three classifications of obstacles that keep adults from participating in organized learning activities: (1) situational barriers, arising from a person's situation in life at any given time; (2) dispositional barriers, attitudes about learning and perceptions of oneself as a learner; and (3) institutional barriers, erected by learning institutions or other organizations that exclude or discourage certain groups of learners.[15] She considers the motives of adult learners for partaking in learning activities as the single most important area to understand in planning programs for them. Cross points out that adults are highly pragmatic learners, who place the greatest value on knowledge that is useful. She also notes that adults who have the basic necessities of life and are better educated are most

likely to cite as motives internal rewards, such as personal satisfaction and the desire to learn. Furthermore, among adult learners, there seems to be a need for more active modes of learning.

Probably the best known adult educator, Malcolm Knowles is the leading proponent of the concept of andragogy, the art and science of teaching adults. Adragogical theory is based on four main assumptions about the adult learner that involve changes in self-concept, the role of experience, readiness to learn, and orientation to learning. According to Knowles, as the individual matures, his or her self-concept moves from one of total dependence to one of increasing self-directedness; s/he accumulates a growing reservoir of experiences which becomes an increasing learning resource and provides a broadening base from which to relate new learning; the readiness to learn is increasingly oriented to the developmental tasks of his or her evolving social roles; and there is a shift in learning from subject-centeredness to problem-centeredness. Knowles also reveals the following about the adult learning process.[17] (1) Adults tend to underestimate their learning ability by over-emphasizing their early school experience and under-emphasizing their recent informal learning experience. (2) Effective learning entails an active search for meaning in which new learning can build on current competencies. (3) While learning achievement is modified by the characteristics of the individual, almost any adult is able to learn almost any subject given sufficient time and attention. (4) Developmental changes in thinking that occur during adulthood, are reflected in problem-solving, critical thinking, and creativity.

Finally, an excellent analysis of the state of the art in adult learning theory has been conducted by Edwin Simpson of Northern Illinois University.[18] In addition to revealing to what extent learning theories abound, the progress being made in adult learning theory is expounded upon. In his synthesis of existing learning theory, he points out that

> Learning activities which are more complex and require conceptualization as well as abstract reasoning seem to be best explained through cognitive theories. Inductive and deductive reasoning based upon activities analysis, synthesis and evaluation in solving problems also may best be described through cognitive and gestalt-field theories. Affective learning requires consideration of theory which incorporates more than behavior and cognition. Theory which recognizes the essence of 'humanness' is necessary when one attempts to satisfactorily explain learning related attitudes and valuing.[19]

It is Simpson's contention that no comprehensive learning theory exists which takes into account the divergent learning that the adult experiences throughout a lifetime. However, he notes that adult educators emphasize two salient dimensions of adult learning which provide undergirding principles for a theory of adult learning. Those two principles identified by Simpson, are (1) autonomy of direction in the act of learning, and (2) integral use of personal experience as a learning resource.

This brief overview gives some sense of the kind of activity that has been taking place related to theory building in adult learning during the 1970s. Noteworthy is the emphasis that adult educators place

on the planning of programs for the adult learner. Also a number of other conclusions can be drawn from the work of this group of adult educators.

First of all, although no learning theory exists that is truly holistic--taking into consideration the total functioning of the person and his or her interactions with the environment--these adult educators acknowledge the need and desirability of such.

Second, thus far theory building in adult learning has tended to focus on relevance for practice, rather than on interpreting the individual adult learning process.

Third, even though existing theories of learning have explained certain conditions under which human learning takes place, we have yet to explain how the learner's analysis of personal life experiences reflects the intrinsic nature of the learning process.

Fourth, this sample of adult educators expressed common concerns about the intrinsic aspects of adult learning in terms of learner motivation, self-directed learning, developmental changes over the life span, and the obstacles or inhibitors faced by the adult learner.

Finally, researchers involved in theory building in adult learning are relying increasingly on a qualitative rather than on a quantitative interpretation that allows for the humanness factor in the adult learning process.

Contributions of Developmentalists

With their focus on life span development, the developmentalists have been making important inroads into furthering our understanding of the impact of life experience on our personal growth. However, like the adult educators, they too, have limited their interpretations. In order to get a better understanding of the relevance of their contributions to building a theory of adult learning, it was necessary to conduct a comparative analysis of some twenty interpretations of adult development. The reasons for conducting the analysis were to find out: (1) how adulthood is being interpreted; (2) how adult learning is being addressed; (3) where there is consensus; (4) where the gaps are; and (5) how these various interpretations relate to the theoretical models being developed. What follows is a synthesis of that analysis. The analysis was intended to provide the broadest possible representations, therefore liberty was taken of incorporating some models that have not been previously identified in terms of adult development. The twenty models selected fall into three categories: (1) linear, (2) hierarchical, and (3) unclassified. They represent the interpretations of sociologists, psychologists, gerontologists, and educators.

Linear Models. The linear models have been the easiest to plot, since they all attempt to build their theoretical perspectives on the basis of chronological age and commensurate changes over the life span. In each one, a clustering pattern is the major determinant for establishing the various phases or stages of the developmental sequence. This clustering is based on the occurrence of certain life

Figure 1
LINEAR MODELS OF ADULT DEVELOPMENT

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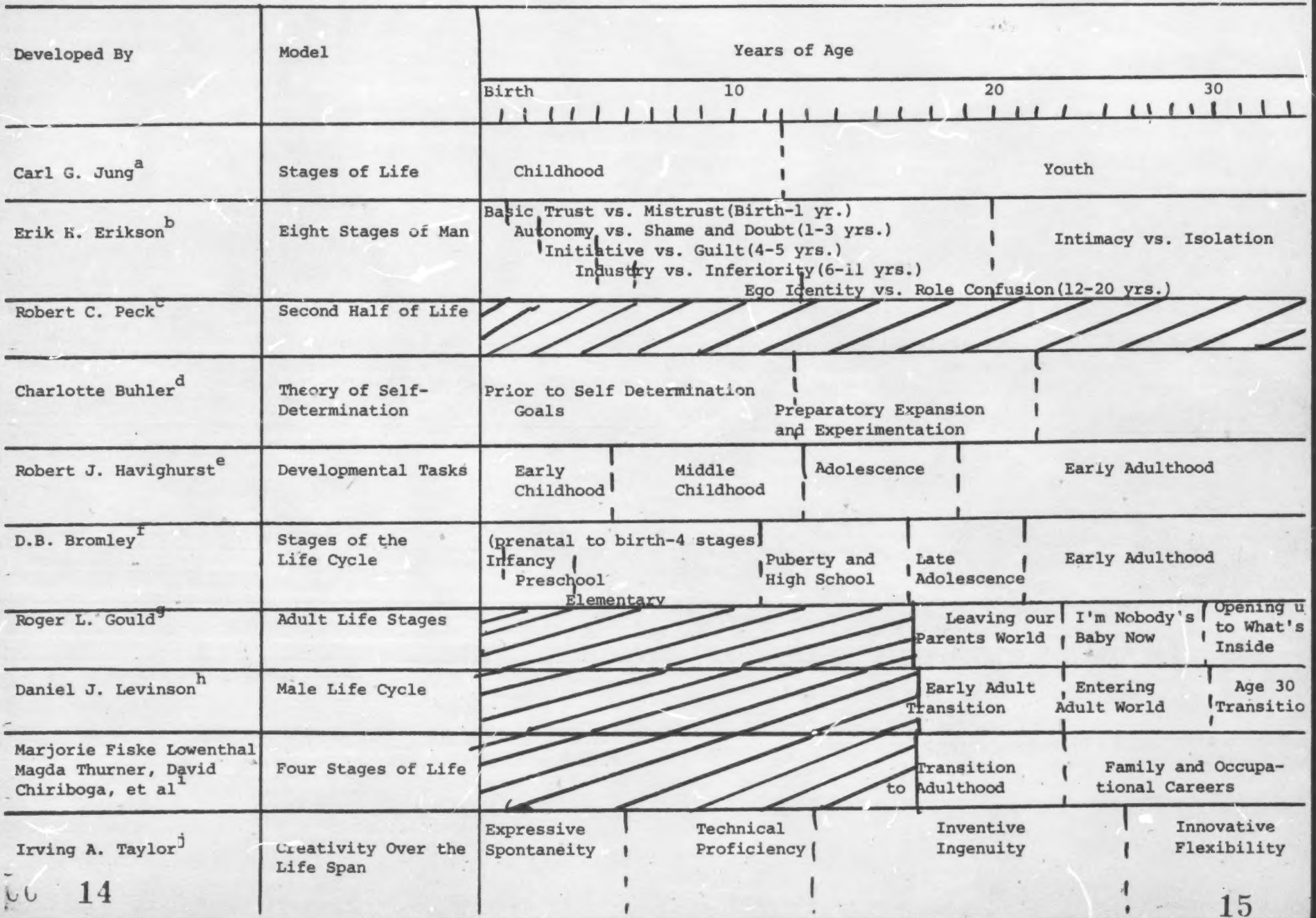
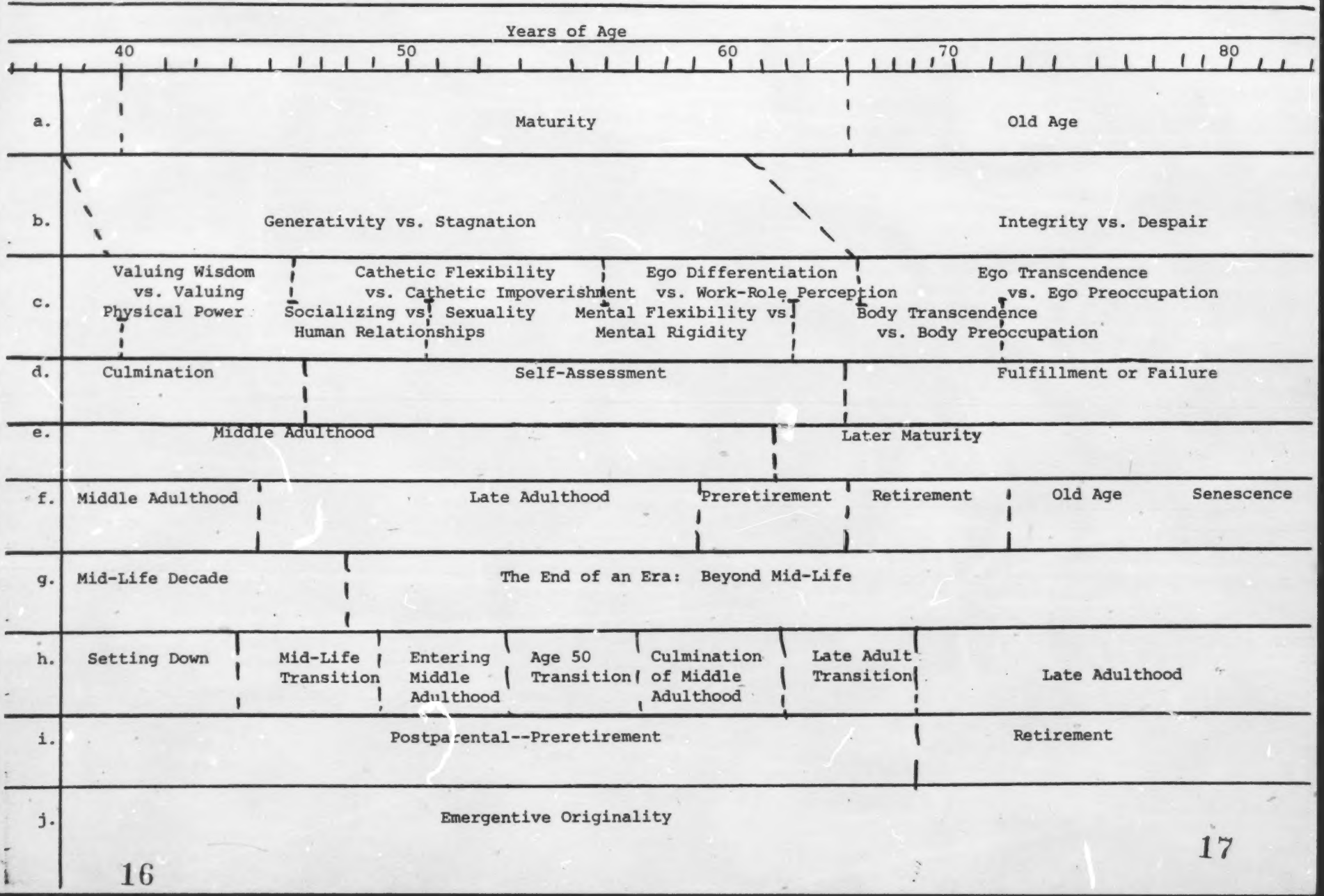


FIGURE 1 CONTINUED



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events at particular points in the life span, as well as the emergence and prominence of certain personal moods that tend to characterize a given period. Even though rather simplistic, Figure 1 provides a graphic comparison of the ten linear models. Without going into the details of each model identified, these theories have the following in common. (1) The interpretation of adult development is on the basis of phases or stages in the chronology of a lifetime. (2) With the exception of Peck, who was selected for his distinction, concentration is on the first fifty years of life. (3) And, none adequately addresses the totality of elements, forces, and circumstances that influence development throughout adulthood.

Hierarchical Models. Unlike the linear models, the hierarchical models have not been plotted on a chronological basis, although for purposes of comparison it was necessary to do so. Fortunately these five models easily fit into a chronological scheme as is reflected in Figure 2. Although the developmental progression of the hierarchical models are not age or stage dependent, but rather according to levels of ascendency, growth is determined on the basis of mastering one level before the individual can proceed to the next one. This group of developmental theories is much more direct in expressing a relationship to learning, and is particularly sensitive to the affective aspects. It should be noted that Maslow, Kohlberg, and Rogers also have been frequently classified as learning theorists. These hierarchical models come closest to providing an holistic interpretation of learning.

Figure 2
HIERARCHICAL MODELS OF ADULT DEVELOPMENT

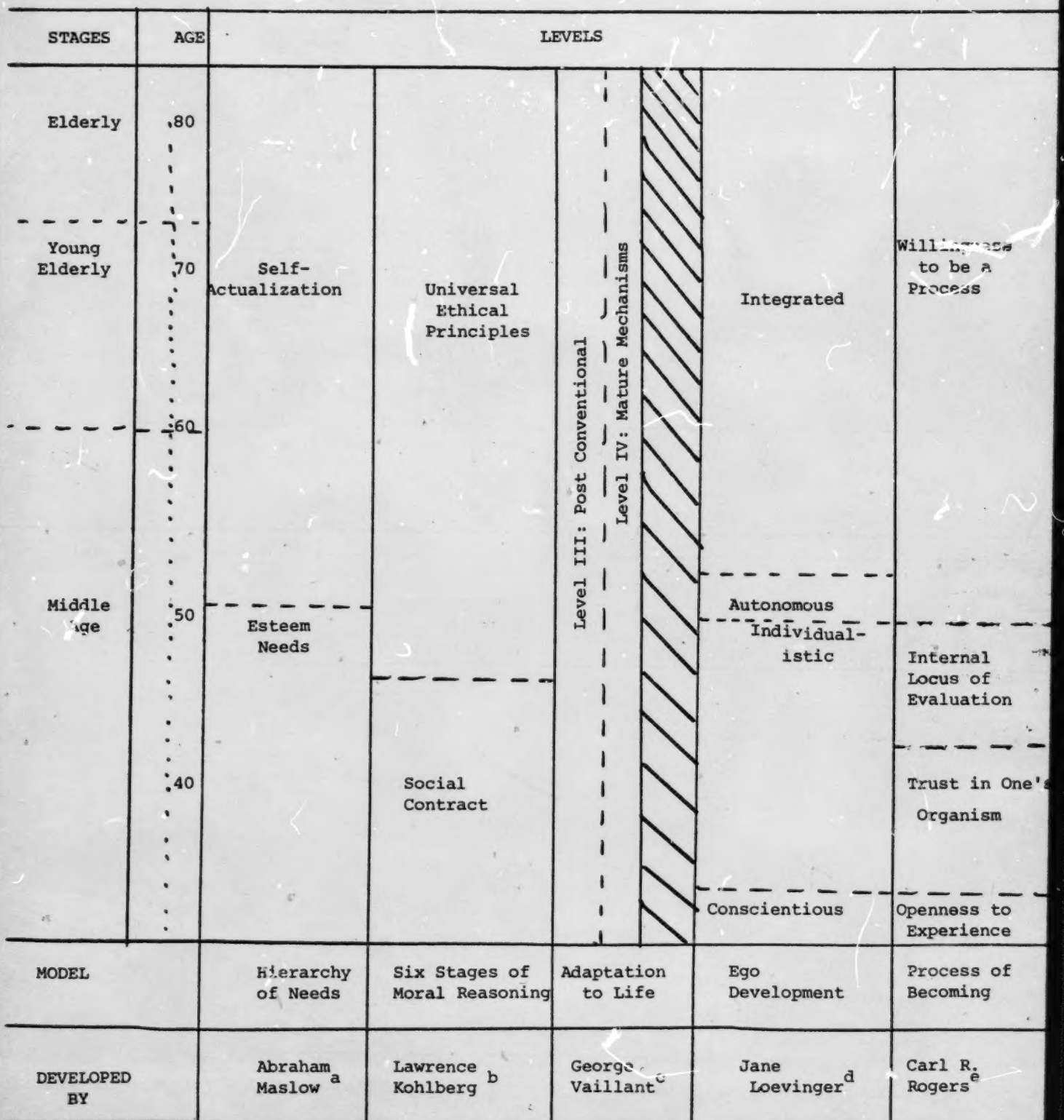

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FIGURE 2 CONTINUED

STAGES	AGE	LEVELS				
Young Adulthood	30	Belongingness and Love Needs	Social Order	Level I: Preconventional Level II: Conventional Level III: Neurotic Defenses Level II: Immature Mechanisms Level I: Psychotic Mechanisms	Conscientious-Conformist	Discovery of Self in Experience
	20		Interpersonal Relationships		Conformist	Experiencing of Feeling
Adolescence		Safety Needs	Individualism		Self-Protective	Getting Behind the Mask
	10				Impulsive	
Childhood		Basic Needs	Heteronomous Morality		Symbiotic	
	Birth				Presocial	
MODEL		Hierarchy of Needs	Six Stages of Moral Reasoning	Adaptation to Life	Ego Development	Process of Becoming
DEVELOPED BY		Abraham Maslow[a]	Lawrence Kohlberg[b]	George Vaillant[c]	Jane Loevinger[d]	Carl R. Rogers[e]

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e. C.R. Rogers. On Becoming a Person, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961.

However, none adequately addresses the extrinsic forces that influence development throughout adulthood.

Unclassified Models. Because of their diversity and deviation from either the linear or hierarchical models of development, the unclassified models are not conducive to a categorical interpretation. Nonetheless, five models have been selected on the basis of their relevance to interpreting adult learning from a developmental perspective. The five models chosen include (1) the transcultural model of maturing (2) the social phenomenological model, (3) the theory of margin, (4) the theory of disengagement, and (5) the activity theory of aging. The transcultural model of maturing considers the similarity of emotional maturity across cultures by focusing on competence in terms of general personality traits associated with effectiveness in adapting to the many complex environmental demands facing the individual as he or she develops.[20] In the social phenomenological model, development is based on the way in which people negotiate and determine their own social interaction which is accomplished through distinct social processes.[21] Adulthood, as described by the theory of margin, is a period of integration and self-protection in which the interaction between a person's capacities and load, that is the level of demand on one's capacities, is a critical factor influencing development.[22] The theory of disengagement assumes decreased social interaction reflecting the mutual withdrawal by society and the aging person; in terms of human development, the individual's withdrawal encompasses decreased emotional involvement in social activities and relationships.[23] Finally, the activity theory of aging is based on the premise that "there is a positive relationship

between activity and life satisfaction and that the greater the role loss, the lower the life satisfaction."[24]

Through this select, although brief, review of developmental perspectives on adulthood, the five reasons for conducting the analysis were satisfied.

First of all, a broad range of interpretations of adulthood exists, with age and stage and personality development dominating theoretical interpretations. The diversity in interpretations further highlights the complexity of adult development, and the fact that we undergo continual and dramatic change over our life spans. In addition the University of Chicago Group, which has included Erickson, Neugarten, Havighurst, and Peck to name a few of the notables, has probably had the greatest influence concerning existing interpretations of adult development.

Second, adult learning is inadvertently addressed by all of the developmental approaches by virtue of their emphasis on adaptation to change in the maturation process. However, of the linear models, only those of Havighurst and Taylor concentrate on the learning aspects of development. Generally, the hierarchial models come the closest to approaching learning in the context of a developmental framework, while none of the unclassified models actually connect learning to the developmental process.

Third, the knowledge gaps in adult development are vast and in terms of learning, the developmentalists, unfortunately, have contributed little to furthering our understanding of the adult learning process.

This may, in part, be due to the nominal number of educators involved in interpreting adult development from a learning perspective, since only recently have they indicated an interest, and this interest is not yet reflected in the literature.

Finally, regarding adult learning theory, it is evident that a comprehensive theory of adult development does not exist, neither does an adequate interpretation of adult learning from a developmental perspective. However, the developmentalists have provided (1) insights into the intricacies and complexities of adult development; (2) a substantial body of knowledge on which to build; and (3) a rationale and justification for the continued pursuit of a comprehensive interpretation of adult learning from a developmental perspective.

II

THE FOUNDATION FOR A TOTAL PERSON MODEL OF ADULT LEARNING THEORY

In examining the current status of adult learning it becomes evident that the most significant contributions have been made by adult educators. Their interpretations of adult learning have focused upon participation and practice as they relate to organized learning, while they have only nominally addressed the adult learning process, itself. We still are far from knowing how adults learn. However, more than any other group of educators, they readily acknowledge the importance of affective learning and the influence of life experiences on the learning process. Clearly theory building in adult learning is in its infancy.

Where the developmentalists are concerned educators seem to have an unabashed romance going that involves the connection between adult learning and adult development. The developmentalists have made us acutely aware of the major developmental changes that occur during adulthood, as well as the intricacies and complexities of our lives that contribute to our diversity and uniqueness as individuals. However, their contributions do not naturally fit into what is known about adult learning. Indeed, it appears as though they have left that part of the interpretation up to educators, who have not, until very recently, taken the assignment seriously. As a result, the knowledge base in this area is extremely limited. A comprehensive theory of adult learning must also take into account the effects of developmental change on the learning process.

To date, no learning theory nor developmental theory has taken into adequate consideration our unique and complex total composition, especially during our adult years. Disregarded has been the fact that our individual diversity increases as we mature. The theoretical model being developed in this paper encompasses three crucial concepts which attempt to incorporate all those dynamics that contribute to our personal composition in its entirety. The concepts include:

1. the *total person* as a living-learning laboratory;
2. life events as learning lessons; and
3. layering as a resource data bank.

Applied to our growth throughout the life span, each one addresses a critical factor that influences the form and function of our unique learning process.

Concept one: The *Total Person* as a Living-Learning Laboratory.

Each of us, as a *total person* consists of three components--two that we all have in common, and one that highlights our individuality. Although distinctive from person to person, the two common components are (1) the sequential, developmental life processes that are on-going from birth to death, and (2) the intrinsic and extrinsic life forces that impact upon those life processes. The other component consists of the major and minor, anticipated and unanticipated life events we experience in profusion throughout the life span. It is the compilation of those components--life processes, life forces, and life events--that establishes our personal, living-learning laboratory. A graphic portrayal of the *total person* is presented in

Figure 3. It allows us to visualize the complexity of human development. The life processes and the life forces have already been identified as the core elements of every one of us as a *total person*. Each life process and each life force has been plotted on the basis of chronological age, and has been divided into developmental phases.

Life Processes. In terms of the life processes, the propensity has been to interpret human growth in terms of chronological age and the configuration of a particular stage within that chronology. Unfortunately, given age and stage, we have managed to homogenize individuals rather than capitalize on their unique differences. However the life processes of the *total person* begin to reveal the variation that exists from person to person.

At least six life processes can be identified as operating simultaneously, although at varying rates, within each of us throughout our lifetime. They are:

(1) The Body--our health, nutrition, and physical growth and development

(2) Sexuality--our physiological and emotional response to maleness and femaleness as we mature

(3) Learning--our adaptation to change through the acquisition and application of knowledge, skills, and experience

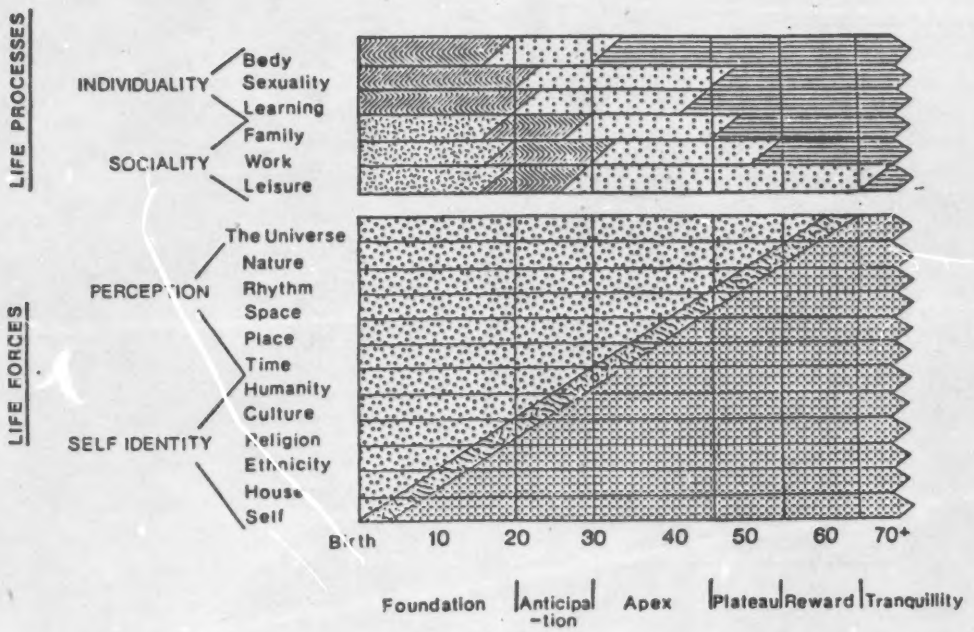
(4) The Family--the establishment and maintenance of our household and its membership as its form and function evolve

(5) Work--the labor we prepare for, cultivate, and modify for a livelihood

(6) Leisure--our use of free time through recreation, social affairs, community activities, and the like

Figure 3

THE TOTAL PERSON



Legend
Phases

Prep Initial Peak Mature

Presence Manifest Assimilation

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Each life process can be separated into three or four developmental phases. Those phases include:

.The prep phase, a covert preparation period preceding the overt onset of a given process, that is experienced by only three of the processes;

.The initial phase, the initial, early years of a developing process;

.The peak phase, its full, middle years; and

.The mature phase, the later and closing years.

Life Forces. The life forces provide the foundation for our personal attitudes, interests, values, and beliefs. Because of their nature, the significance of the life forces has not been adequately recognized by either adult educators, learning theorists, or developmentalists. Yet the life forces provide the glue for our character development and sense of personal worth.

At least twelve life forces are present and influence our development over the life span. Along with the life processes, they also operate simultaneously and at varying degrees of growth. They are:

(1) Self--how we value ourselves as human beings in terms of how we see ourselves and how we believe others see us

(2) House--the past, present and future aspects of our family, our relatives, and our heritage over generations

(3) Ethnicity--the customs, language and social views transmitted to us by the nationality and ethnology of our ancestry up to today.

(4) Culture--the thoughts, the speech, the actions, and the material aspects of the society we are living in that influence us

(5) Religion--the attitudes, beliefs, and practices which relate to our faithful devotion to an acknowledged ultimate reality or deity

(6) Humanity--our recognition of the attributes of mankind, the universal commonality of man, that is, how we are all alike

(7) Time--how we measure the continuum of past, present, and future actions, sequences, or events in our development

(8) Space--the psycho-social areas we can move in, given our sense of self, house, ethnicity, culture, religion, and humanity

(9) Place--our sphere of influence based upon our position and location in our family, work and social environs

(10) Rhythm--the pace of our lives in terms of the flow of life events and our ability to synchronize them as we develop

(11) Nature--our sense of relationship with all other living things

(12) The Universe--the totality of our being, as reflected by the interdependence and interrelatedness of the world of human experience through the orderly, harmonious, and systematic integration of all the preceding eleven life forces.

With the exception of self, all of the life forces follow three developmental phases that are hypothetical in nature, and also are characterized by a hierarchical progression. They consist of:

.The presence phase that acknowledges the existence of each force;

.The manifest phase that represents the surfacing and prominence of a given force; and

.The assimilation phase that represents its incorporation, in harmony with the other forces.

Life Stages. By combining the twelve life forces and the six life processes that continually impact on our system, the magnitude of our complex composition becomes obvious. When brought together to form a composite, six life stages evolve. They are:

(1) Foundation, stage one, begins at birth to 20 years of age,

(2) Anticipation, stage two, is from 20 to 30 years of age,

(3) Apex, stage three, is from 30 to 45 years of age,

(4) Plateau, stage four, is from 45 to 55 years of age,

(5) Reward, stage five, is from 55 to 70 years of age, and

(6) Tranquillity, stage six, is from age 70 onward.

Mention must also be made of four other classifications that are identified in Figure 3, but are separate and apart from the chronology of development. These classifications represent shared characteristics of certain processes and forces, and are most akin to personality development.

- Individuality refers to those life processes that are dependent upon the individual as a solitary unit
- Sociality refers to those life processes that are dependent upon social interaction with others
- Self-identity refers to those life forces that influence one's sense of self, and
- Perception refers to those life forces that influence a person's interpretation of his or her interaction with the environment.

That configuration of the *total person* provides us with the composition of our living-learning laboratory in which each of us functions as both learner and educator throughout our lifetime.

Concept Two: Life Events as Learning Lessons.

It is within the living-learning laboratory of the *total person* that life events, our basic learning lessons, are anticipated, experienced, and responded to. Life events are facilitators of change, and as such contribute significantly to our growth as a *total person.* As life events occur, they naturally bring about change in our total life system.

Life events can be classified into at least seven categories. There are those that are

(1) Absolute--they focus on our physiological development over the life span and are held in common with virtually all humankind

(2) Predetermined--they concentrate on traditions and common societal practice and custom

(3) Planned--they focus on accomplishing a designated task or achieving a special goal

(4) Compelling--they involve experiencing repeatedly an irresistible urge that prompts us to act

(5) Counteractive--they concentrate on our acting out in a manner contrary to what is expected

(6) Spontaneous--they encompass the voluntary, impulsive and intuitive actions we partake in

(7) Random--they involve those we are unable to anticipate and over which we have no control

The sequence, the configuration, the response set, and the ultimate outcome of each life event experienced is unique to each of us and cannot be duplicated by any other person. We are constantly building response patterns to life events. This building process allows us to transfer response patterns from past life events we have undergone to new life events

we are now encountering. We can examine, handle, and learn from our response patterns to given life events through the use of a five-step sequence which involves the following

> Step One: Identification--we recognize a life event we have experienced by acknowledging it;
>
> Step Two: Selection--we choose a response or set of responses to the life event from our available repertoire of responses, in keeping with our sense of self;
>
> Step Three: Performance--we act out our selected responses and thereby determine the appropriateness of fit;
>
> Step Four: Modification--we practice and make changes in our selected response set to accommodate our interpretation of a given life event; and finally
>
> Step Five: Adoption--through repeated performance of the selected response or set of responses, modification is completed as the action becomes part of us and adds to, or further reinforces, our repertoire of responses.

Through this sequence, life events facilitate the use of our learning capacities as we express our feelings, attitudes, values and beliefs; examine them; practice them; and alter them in keeping with our developing self. As we experience life events, we develop our decision-making capacities and our problem-solving abilities. It is through these two dynamics that we opt for certain responses and discard others. We simply keep what seems to work for us.

In that regard, there are three other critical dimensions of life events. They include:

1. Patterns of response--As we progress through the life span and experience life events, we become increasingly able to determine our response to them. By relying consistently on a given set of responses, we reinforce certain patterns that we tend to follow over and over again.

2. Interchangeability--The response patterns we build involve a high degree of interchange with other like episodes. Through this process, we transpose response patterns from past life events we have experienced, to new life events we are now experiencing.

3. Repertoire of responses--As we experience life events, we accumulate a range of alternative responses. Based upon our response patterns and the quality of interchangeability, we continue to refine our response options to a few selections, while keeping others in abeyance.

These three factors provide the guidelines for life events in their capacity as learning lessons operating within our living-learning laboratory.

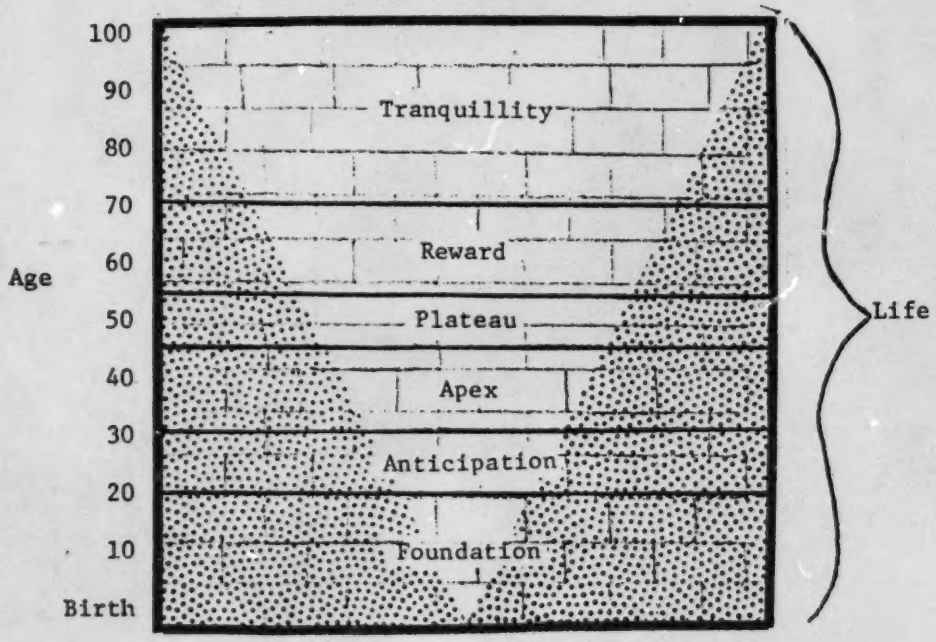
Concept Three: Layering as a Resource Data Bank.

In conjunction with interpreting life events as learning lessons, a special dimension of our developmental process is that of layering. As life events make up our learning lessons, so layering serves as our resource data bank. The majority of developmentalists describe and define our progress through the life span only on a linear basis. Ignored, but occurring simultaneously with our linear progression is the vertical building that occurs as we experience our life events. Layering actually focuses upon our accumulating, sorting through, and storing our attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, values, feelings, skills, and behaviors as we develop. It is a building process based on the premise that as we proceed through our ages and stages, we collect the various pieces of our lives, and store them for future reference.

Every life event we experience represents a building block in our development, and contributes to the stratum of the life stage in which it occurs. We progress through each stage by a building process that involves adding and connecting the blocks of life events. When a stratum of life (a life stage) has been completed, we begin the next by building on top of it, and so on throughout the life span. In that context, Figure 4 presents life as a monolith, and the stratum of each life stage as a critical level of its composition. Each stage carries greater

Figure 4

THE LAYERS OF LIFE



weight than the preceding one, continually compressing the ones beneath. Also within that monolith, an inverted pyramid is built-up with its tip in the first layer or stratum. The blocks within the pyramid serve as the retaining wall of the monolith. They represent the core of life events that

have had greatest impact on the development and direction of our lives. Those outside of the pyramid represent lesser events that have contributed to our total configuration, and have had nominal influence on our composition. We retain all life events we experience throughout our lifetime. However, those occurring most recently are more pertinent in our present perception and recall, and therefore assume the largest segment of the pyramid. As time passes and layering continues, their prominence decreases commensurately.

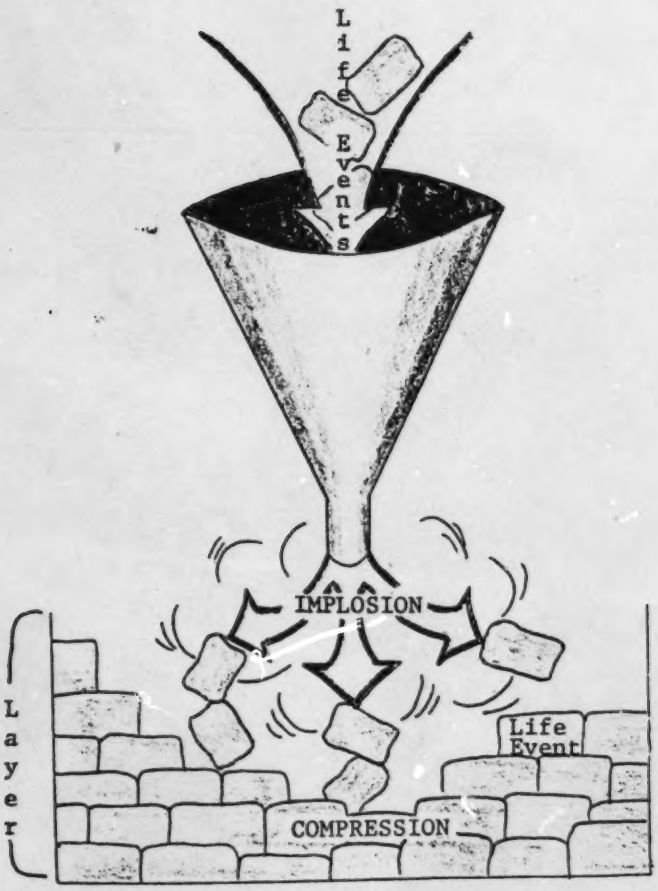
Through the process of layering, our living-learning laboratory also serves as an information center that is constantly processing the life events we experience. However, layering involves more than the storage and retrieval of pertinent life-experience-related information. In addition, this process also entails a series of other operations, that have to do with interpreting and shaping for future referral the information it gathers. The other operations of the layering process are represented in Figure 5. They include funneling, implosion and compression.

1. Funneling involves the flow of information from the prevailing layer downward with extraneous data funneled first and most rapidly, and pertainent data remaining near the surface and flowing at a much slower rate. When a life event occurs, we internalize all of the factors it encompasses that we are consciously, as well as unconsciously aware of. We take in the information based on our perception of its relevance, and so funneling occurs.

Figure 5

THE LAYERING PROCESS

FUNNELING



2. Implosion follows funneling, and involves integrating and centralizing new information in consonance with stored information, based on perceived order of importance. Once all the elements encompassing a given life event have been funneled, they are arranged into multi-dimensional groupings that take into account factors such as time and frequency of occurrence; specific and general impact on our personal system; complexity of composition; and degree of resource utilization in

terms of energy expended and response options used. Through implosion the information we have taken in is arranged and rearranged in a manner compatible with the functioning of our *total person* system as it continues to evolve.

3. Compression follows implosion and involves the continuous compacting and placement of life-events-related information so that it remains useable and accessible. All of our past life experiences are in some form of compression within us, and as we continue to experience life events, we instinctively call upon our "inner resources" that are ultimately provided through this operation.

How layering serves as the resource data bank of our living-learning laboratory begins to be revealed through these three operations. Figure 5 represents how they function. Layering is not a static concept; it is a constantly moving dynamic.

Tenets of the Model

The *Total Person* model is based on a number of unique principles that further our understanding of the adult learning process. Ten tenets are listed:

1. The adult learning process in each of us entails our total composition and takes into account its complexity.

2. Human development follows both a vertical and linear progression that is a crucial part of the intrinsic nature of the adult learning process.

3. The learner-educator dyad operates within each of us throughout our lifespan.

4. The essence of learning, especially during adulthood, is based on our personal response to life events.

5. Life events cultivate most the affective, spontaneous and intuitive and reflective dimensions of learning.

6. Each of us possesses readily identifiable learning patterns that we continue to refine.

7. Each of us possesses intrinsic learning operations that are stimulated by life events and function continuously.

8. Each of us possesses a built-in mechanism that evaluates our learning experiences (life events) and puts them into a perceived, as well as unconscious order of importance.

9. Each of us possesses the capacity to determine the direction of our lives, based on how we use our problem-solving and decision-making capacities.

10. The adult learning process extends well beyond cognitive learning as we know it, and is most attuned with affective, spontaneous, and intuitive and reflective learning that is highlighted by the myriad of life events each of us experiences over our life span.

In Conclusion...

The underlying premise of this evolving theory of adult learning is based on a number of self-evident truths. First of all, whether child or adult, we do not know how a person learns. Second, a solid theoretical base addressing adult learning and adult learning potential does not exist. Third, the scope of our learning potential

is unknown. Fourth, the dominant influence of society in shaping every one of us inhibits our growth in individuality. Finally, we continue to interpret the human being in segments of his or her total nature. The undergirding premise of the total person model of adult learning theory being constructed is that until we can realize our full learning potential, indeed human potential, our ability to function effectively and in harmony, collectively remains circumscribed.

In that regard, the total person model attempts to remove from isolation the multitude of complex factors that contribute to our being, and to approach them as inseperable, inter-connected, and interdependent. This model also provides an interpretation of life events that acknowledges their importance and power in shaping our personal system within a learning context. In addition, it provides a developmental process which accounts for how we use our inner resources to adapt to change. The foundation for a comprehensive theory of adult learning has been laid; the building process will continue.

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